Macroeconomic Policy and Financial Markets
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Course Introduction

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1 Course Objectives

This course, Macroeconomic Policy and Financial Markets, is specially constructed for postgraduates studying finance and related subjects. The course is designed to increase the depth of your understanding whether or not you have studied economics or macroeconomics previously. Although it does not require previous study of macroeconomics, if you have studied an undergraduate macroeconomics course this course adds to your knowledge because, unlike other courses, we focus on the relation financial markets have to macroeconomics.

Our intention is that after successfully completing the course students from varied backgrounds will understand the key elements of macroeconomics and their connection with financial markets. We place the subject in a real-world context, aiming to show how theoretical and empirical knowledge of macroeconomics and financial markets provides ways to analyse the salient problems faced by modern macroeconomic policy makers.

2 The Course Author

Laurence Harris is Professor of Economics in the University of London and contributes to CeFiMS as a member of the Department of Financial and Management Studies, SOAS, University of London. He has previously taught at several universities including London School of Economics; University of California Berkeley; Harvard University; Birkbeck, University of London; the Open University; University of Zimbabwe. He has published nine books and eighty articles. Books include Monetary Theory; New Perspectives on the Financial System; City of Capital; and Peculiarities of the British Economy.

3 The Course Structure

Unit 1  Macroeconomics and the World of Finance
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Getting Macroeconomics in Perspective
1.3 Long-Run and Short-Run Macroeconomics
1.4 Aggregate Demand and National Income Accounts
1.5 Alternative Windows on Macroeconomics
1.6 Macroeconomics and Financial Markets
1.7 Macroeconomics and Finance in Subsequent Units

Unit 2  Saving and Finance
2.1 Introduction: Real and Financial Saving
2.2 Life Cycle Theory of Saving
2.3 Flow of Savings to Financial Markets - Demographic Fundamentals
2.4 Impact of Financial Markets on Saving - Interest Rate Effect
2.5 Impact of Financial Markets on Saving - Wealth Effect

Unit 3  Investment and Financial Markets
3.1 Capital Accumulation
3.2 Interest Rates and Investment - the Basic Model
4 Learning Outcomes

When you have completed your study of this course, you will be able to

- outline and discuss the connection between financial markets, real saving by households, and real investment by firms
- analyse how monetary policy can affect real macroeconomic activity through its interaction with financial markets
- explain the relation between financial markets and governments’ fiscal policies
- discuss the effect that expectations of future inflation and interest rates can have on macroeconomic policy and financial markets
- analyse the connection between foreign exchange markets, imports and exports
- examine the possibility of instability arising from interaction between international capital flows and financial markets
- evaluate theories in the light of empirical evidence
• use theory and evidence to analyse actual problems facing macroeconomic policy makers.

5 Study Materials

This Study Guide is your central learning resource as it structures your learning unit by unit. Each unit should be studied within a week. It is designed in the expectation that studying the unit and the associated core readings in the textbook and course reader will require 15 to 20 hours during the week.

Textbook

In addition to this Study Guide you must read, as core readings, assigned chapters in the textbook:


We have chosen and supplied Miles, Scott and Breedon’s textbook, instead of one of the many other macroeconomics textbooks available, because it is written for the same type of postgraduate students as this course. Designed for MBA students and others, it deals with advanced subjects and relates them to modern problems without requiring previous study of macroeconomics. This textbook gives more attention than others to the role of financial markets, and is written for students who do not have advanced mathematical or statistical knowledge.

Course Reader

We also provide you with academic articles and other reports, which are assigned as core readings in the Study Guide. They make up a Course Reader. You are expected to read them as an essential part of the course although you will find that some academic articles range more widely than the Study Guide or use more advanced techniques and have a greater level of conceptual difficulty than the textbook. That is the nature of academic articles, but we have selected articles and reports whose main arguments can be understood and appreciated at the level appropriate to this course.

Optional reading

The Study Guide refers to academic articles, books, and other items that you can choose to read if you wish to investigate a particular topic further. We have not provided printed copies of such material but, where possible, provide an internet address (URL) where you can read the item. These items are not required reading and you will not be assessed on them in the examination or assignments. But we believe you can enrich your studies during the course or after it by looking at the optional reading. Indeed, we would encourage you to choose your own optional readings on macroeconomics and financial markets by searching the internet and accessing academic journals through the Library resources on the CeFiMS Online Study Centre.

DVD: Macroeconomics – The Policy Makers

An additional element provided for this course is a DVD, on which leading policy-makers talk to CeFiMS about their experiences. All the decision makers and advisers on the DVD have dealt with difficult macroeconomic problems in a range of countries and they explain how they approached the problem and considered alternative policies.

They include
Course Introduction

- Paul Volcker, looking back on his experience as Chairman of the Federal Reserve
- Sir Alan Budd, as Economic Adviser in the British Treasury (Ministry of Finance),
- Guillermo Ortiz, as the Governor of Mexico’s central bank
- Professor Lord Richard Layard, as advisor to the Russian government
- Benno Ndulu, of the World Bank
- Professor Rudiger Dornbusch, on experience of Latin American macroeconomic policy
- Professor Sakakibura, on Japan’s recent policy problems.

The interviews were recorded by CeFiMS for the International Monetary Fund and designed for officials studying macroeconomics with the IMF Institute. They are reproduced here with kind permission of the IMF. They show case studies intended to enable students to link their study of principles to actual macroeconomic policy making in the complex real world.

The interviews on the DVD are divided into four sections, each lasting approximately 30 minutes and each focusing on a different element of macroeconomic policy:

1. **Monetary Policy in Theory and Practice**
2. **Fiscal Policy in Theory and Practice**
3. **Foreign Trade and Exchange Rate Policy**
4. **Capital Flows and Exchange Rates**

**How should you relate these sections to your study of this Unit?**

Each section of the DVD has a direct relevance to the topic of a particular unit in the course. Section 1 relates to Unit 4; section 2 to Unit 5; section 3 to Unit 7; and section 4 to Unit 8. However, your use of the DVD is optional and is not a required element of your study for the course. You will not be assessed on the DVD’s contents in the examination or the assignments.

Nonetheless, we believe that watching the DVD will enrich your studies and deepen your understanding. Since it is not a compulsory element, you can watch it at any time during your study of the course (or after) without trying to watch a particular section in the same week as you are studying a particular unit.

### 6 Assessment

Your performance on each course is assessed through two written assignments and one examination. The assignments are written after week four and eight of the course session and the examination is written at a local examination centre in October.

The assignment questions contain fairly detailed guidance about what is required. All assignment answers are limited to 2,500 words and are marked using marking guidelines. When you receive your grade it is accompanied by comments on your paper, including advice about how you might improve, and any clarifications about matters you may not have understood. These comments are designed to help you master the subject and to improve your skills as you progress through your programme.

The written examinations are ‘unseen’ (you will only see the paper in the exam centre) and written by hand, over a three hour period. We advise that you
practice writing exams in these conditions as part of you examination preparation, as it is not something you would normally do.

You are not allowed to take in books or notes to the exam room. This means that you need to revise thoroughly in preparation for each exam. This is especially important if you have completed the course in the early part of the year, or in a previous year.

Preparing for Assignments and Exams

There is good advice on preparing for assignments and exams and writing them in Sections 8.2 and 8.3 of Studying at a Distance by Talbot. We recommend that you follow this advice.

The examinations you will sit are designed to evaluate your knowledge and skills in the subjects you have studied: they are not designed to trick you. If you have studied the course thoroughly, you will pass the exam.

Understanding assessment questions

Examination and assignment questions are set to test a range of knowledge and skills. Sometimes a question will contain more than one part, each part testing a different aspect of your skills and knowledge. You need to spot the key words to know what is being asked of you. Here we categorise the types of things that are asked for in assignments and exams, and the words used. All the examples are from CeFiMS examination papers and assignment questions.

Definitions

Some questions mainly require you to show that you have learned some concepts, by setting out their precise meaning. Such questions are likely to be preliminary and be supplemented by more analytical questions. Generally ‘Pass marks’ are awarded if the answer only contains definitions. They will contain words such as:

- Describe
- Define
- Examine
- Distinguish between
- Compare
- Contrast
- Write notes on
- Outline
- What is meant by
- List

Reasoning

Other questions are designed to test your reasoning, by explaining cause and effect. Convincing explanations generally carry additional marks to basic definitions. They will include words such as:

- Interpret
- Explain
- What conditions influence
- What are the consequences of
- What are the implications of

Judgment

Others ask you to make a judgment, perhaps of a policy or of a course of action. They will include words like:

- Evaluate
• Critically examine
• Assess
• Do you agree that
• To what extent does

**Calculation**

Sometimes, you are asked to make a calculation, using a specified technique, where the question begins:

• Use indifference curve analysis to
• Using any economic model you know
• Calculate the standard deviation
• Test whether

It is most likely that questions that ask you to make a calculation will also ask for an application of the result, or an interpretation.

**Advice**

Other questions ask you to provide advice in a particular situation. This applies to law questions and to policy papers where advice is asked in relation to a policy problem. Your advice should be based on relevant law, principles, evidence of what actions are likely to be effective.

• Advise
• Provide advice on
• Explain how you would advise

**Critique**

In many cases the question will include the word ‘critically’. This means that you are expected to look at the question from at least two points of view, offering a critique of each view and your judgment. You are expected to be critical of what you have read.

The questions may begin

• Critically analyse
• Critically consider
• Critically assess
• Critically discuss the argument that

**Examine by argument**

Questions that begin with ‘discuss’ are similar – they ask you to examine by argument, to debate and give reasons for and against a variety of options, for example

• Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of
• Discuss this statement
• Discuss the view that
• Discuss the arguments and debates concerning

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**The grading scheme**

Details of the general definitions of what is expected in order to obtain a particular grade are shown below. Remember: examiners will take account of the fact that examination conditions are less conducive to polished work than the conditions in which you write your assignments. These criteria are used in grading all assignments and examinations. Note that as the criteria of each grade rises, it accumulates the elements of the grade below. Assignments awarded better marks will therefore have become comprehensive in both their depth of core skills and advanced skills.
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70% and above: Distinction As for the (60-69%) below plus:
- shows clear evidence of wide and relevant reading and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- develops a sophisticated and intelligent argument
- shows a rigorous use and a sophisticated understanding of relevant source materials, balancing appropriately between factual detail and key theoretical issues. Materials are evaluated directly and their assumptions and arguments challenged and/or appraised
- shows original thinking and a willingness to take risks

60-69%: Merit As for the (50-59%) below plus:
- shows strong evidence of critical insight and critical thinking
- shows a detailed understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues and directly engages with the relevant literature on the topic
- develops a focussed and clear argument and articulates clearly and convincingly a sustained train of logical thought
- shows clear evidence of planning and appropriate choice of sources and methodology

50-59%: Pass below Merit (50% = pass mark)
- shows a reasonable understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues involved
- shows evidence of planning and selection from appropriate sources,
- demonstrates some knowledge of the literature
- the text shows, in places, examples of a clear train of thought or argument
- the text is introduced and concludes appropriately

45-49%: Marginal Failure
- shows some awareness and understanding of the factual or theoretical issues, but with little development
- misunderstandings are evident
- shows some evidence of planning, although irrelevant/unrelated material or arguments are included

0-44%: Clear Failure
- fails to answer the question or to develop an argument that relates to the question set
- does not engage with the relevant literature or demonstrate a knowledge of the key issues
- contains clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings

[approved by Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee November 2006]

Specimen exam papers

Your final examination will be very similar to the Specimen Exam Paper that you received in your course materials. It will have the same structure and style and the range of question will be comparable.

CeFIIMS does not provide past papers or model answers to papers. Our courses are continuously updated and past papers will not be a reliable guide to current and future examinations. The specimen exam paper is designed to be relevant to reflect the exam that will be set on the current edition of the course.
Further information

The OSC will have documentation and information on each year’s examination registration and administration process. If you still have questions, both academics and administrators are available to answer queries.

The Regulations are also available at www.cefims.ac.uk/regulations.shtml, setting out the rules by which exams are governed.
Macroeconomic Policy & Financial Markets

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Centre for Financial and Management Studies

MSc Examination
MBA Examination
Postgraduate Diploma Examination
for External Students

FINANCE
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
FINANCIAL ECONOMICS
DEVELOPMENT FINANCE
BANKING

Macroeconomic Policy & Financial Markets

Specimen Examination

This is a specimen examination paper designed to show you the type of examination you will have at the end of Macroeconomic Policy and Financial Markets course. The number of questions required and the structure of the examination will be the same, but the wording and requirements of each question will be different. Best wishes for success on your final examination.

The examination must be completed in THREE hours. Answer THREE questions, at least ONE question from EACH section.

The examiners give equal weight to each question; therefore, you are advised to distribute your time approximately equally between three questions. The examiners wish to see evidence of your ability to understand theoretical principles and your ability to critically discuss their application.

Please do not remove this paper from the examination room.
It must be attached to your answer book at the end of the examination.

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Please turn over
Answer THREE questions, at least ONE question from EACH section.

**Section A**  
* (Answer at least ONE question from this section)

1. Explain the ‘life cycle’ theory of saving and discuss its relevance for understanding aggregate saving in an economy.

2. Explain and discuss the theory that firms’ investment is determined by the cost of capital.

3. ‘To understand what determines the level of aggregate demand this year we must understand the principle that individuals make choices between consumption now and consumption in the future.’ Explain and discuss.

4. Central bankers can either be required to follow policy rules or can be given discretion over monetary policy. Discuss the merits of each approach.

**Section B**  
* (Answer at least ONE question from this section)

5. ‘Ministers of Finance are in positions of great power because fiscal policy has a major effect on aggregate demand’. Discuss.

6. Outline and discuss the role of expectations in macroeconomic policy.

7. How do nominal exchange rates reflect countries’ inflation rates? In your answer, please use both theoretical and empirical reasoning.

8. What do you understand by the concept ‘uncovered interest parity’? How relevant is the concept for analysing countries’ international capital flows, exchange rates, and macroeconomic policy?

[END OF EXAMINATION]
Unit Content

Unit 1 will introduce you to the main topics you will study in the whole course. It will discuss the distinction between macroeconomic analysis that focuses on long-run growth of the economy and the macroeconomics of short-run fluctuations, and outline the distinction between aggregate demand factors and aggregate supply factors affecting macroeconomic outcomes. In studying the unit, you will consider key questions concerning the link between macroeconomics and financial markets, and learn to distinguish the financial markets approach to macroeconomics from other windows upon the macroeconomy.

Learning Objectives

When you have completed your study of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the role of national income accounts
- interpret central banks’ analyses of short-term macroeconomic changes
- explain the difference between ‘price effects’ and ‘quantity effects’ in the relation between finance and aggregate expenditure.

Readings for Unit 1

Textbook


Course Reader

Chairman Alan Greenspan (2002) ‘Federal Reserve Board’s semiannual monetary policy report to the Congress’


Optional reading

Where we recommend optional reading beyond the core reading, this is to encourage you to follow some of the references to deepen your understanding of particular areas, but they are not required reading.
1.1 Introduction

All people concerned with finance quickly find that they have to keep a watch on three types of events and try to understand them. One is the movements of financial markets – especially equity markets, bond markets, money markets and foreign exchange markets. Another is news about individual companies and borrowers. The third is macroeconomic news about the economy as a whole, especially the growth of total output and income (GDP), inflation and, in most economies, the balance of payments.

This course is designed to enable you to understand the key elements of macroeconomics and their connection with financial markets – the third type of event and its relation to the first.

The course is designed to increase the depth of your understanding whether or not you have studied economics or macroeconomics previously. Although it does not require previous study of macroeconomics, if you have studied an undergraduate macroeconomics course this course adds to your knowledge because, unlike other courses, we focus on the relation financial markets have to macroeconomics.

Macroeconomics became fully established as an important field of economics after the Second World War ended in 1945. Fifty to sixty years ago many economists, especially in Britain and the US, regarded it as more important than microeconomics. They believed that the focus it had then on explaining medium-term fluctuations in gross domestic product and employment provided analytical foundations for policies that would eliminate severe business cycles and the mass unemployment that accompanied them.

The broad consensus on the potential of macroeconomic policy was not universal, but many agreed that judicious macroeconomic policies could overcome the scourges of recession, general unemployment, foreign trade interruptions and inflation. The most active debate was over which type of macroeconomic policy was more useful and how different types should be combined.

The main macroeconomic policies in contention were:

- monetary policy, focusing on either interest rates or a monetary aggregate (the stock of money, or the amount of credit)
- fiscal policy, focusing on the budget balance between tax revenues and government expenditure.

For open economies, policy on the exchange rate also entered the debate in countries where exchange rates were not allowed to float freely in response to market forces. And, for a period in the 1960s and 1970s some argued that incomes policies involving direct control of wage rate increases should be an important macroeconomic policy.

Macroeconomics in the last decades of the twentieth century was marked by apparently strong divisions between writers identifying themselves as belonging to one of two camps: Keynesian or Monetarist. The distinctions are blurred, but in terms of policy Keynesians broadly favoured use of fiscal
policy and, at times, exchange rate policy and incomes policy, to maintain high employment, while Monetarists broadly favoured the use of monetary policy and focused on the control of inflation.

We still have controversies over the appropriateness of different policy mixes, especially as the US and European economies have, since the 2008 financial crisis faced recession and high unemployment. And the fragility of the banking system has added a third policy element to complicate fiscal and monetary policy – financial stability policy.

In the new environment fiscal policy has focused on debates over the size of a ‘fiscal stimulus’ and how rapidly it should be withdrawn through an ‘austerity budget’. Monetary policy has focused on the merits and problems of using ‘quantitative easing’ designed to increase liquidity in the economy. And the balance between fiscal and monetary policy has been debated in terms of the relative merits of fiscal stimulus and quantitative easing.

But the disagreements are more nuanced and multifaceted than the old confrontation between a simplified Keynesian and a simplified Monetarist school. Therefore this course does not make reference to that historic division, or, indeed, to its predecessors (the debates from the 1930s between Keynesians and writers styled as ‘Classical’ or as ‘Austrian School’).

1.2 Getting Macroeconomics in Perspective

Financial markets and investors receive a large quantity of macroeconomic information every week. But to understand macroeconomics we need to step back from those data. To see what lies behind the numbers we need to create some distance, and in order to do that we need a framework for organising our thoughts.

The macroeconomic news that regularly confronts finance people is both high frequency and dense. News appears daily about the economy’s macroeconomic indicators, and continuous updates are viewed at all hours on phones and tablets.

Official measures of a country’s output and expenditure appear every three months in developed countries. Official figures for employment, inflation and the balance of payments appear monthly in many countries. Indicators giving clues about the direction of those measures appear frequently, as do reports measuring businesses’ and economists’ expectations about their future direction. And, equally as prominently as such high-frequency data about the ‘home’ economy, the computer screens and newspapers give immediate information about the macroeconomic indicators of other large economies that has to be absorbed – for example, the most recent GDP growth of the USA, Euro-zone, and Japan; China’s rate of growth of imports and exports; or shipping prices (a change in which might give advance notice of an increase or decrease in countries’ foreign trade volumes).

The density and high frequency of that macroeconomic information makes it difficult to see the macroeconomic picture as a whole. It is difficult to know whether your country is entering a period of sustained growth in GDP, for example, by examining recent months’ data on all the available indicators.
That is partly because the indicators might provide contradictory signals—because the last few quarters’ GDP growth figures, for example, might reflect temporary factors that boost them or push them down.

Another reason why recent data fail to give a clear picture of the macroeconomic position is that the data themselves are inaccurate. Even in countries that have well-established, well-resourced, and expert statistical services there are two sources of inaccuracy.

- The first, which affects data over a long period, is that it is difficult to be certain that the measure we have is defined in a way that accurately represents the category we are trying to measure.
- The second is that, even if we are sure that the definition used—for example, for GDP statistics—does match the idea of gross domestic product, the collection and processing of data in a short period creates inaccuracies. Therefore, the announced GDP statistics often have to be revised later.

A famous example concerned the macroeconomic position of the US in 2001, a year when there was great uncertainty. The data published for 2001 showed that GDP had declined, output had fallen, in one quarter but had grown, albeit modestly, in the three other quarters. But in July 2002 the US statisticians revised their estimates of GDP for 2001. The new, more reliable, data showed that, in fact, GDP had declined in three quarters of 2001. Anyone who, at the end of 2001 or beginning of 2002, had used the published data to judge the US economy would have been misled into thinking it had been stronger than it actually was.

**Optional readings**

You might find it interesting to investigate further the reasons why published macroeconomic economic data can be misleading. Here are two readings that will help you do that.

**Optional reading 1:** To consider the problem that the things measured by the statistics might not correspond to the categories we are trying to measure, we suggest you read the arguments of William Nordhaus, Professor of Economics at Yale University. He put them to the United States Congress Joint Economic Committee in 1992, for changing the methods the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) uses for calculating National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA). It’s an interesting and readable paper:


**Optional reading 2:** To consider the problem that the published data on macroeconomic aggregates, the National Income and Product Accounts, are initially inaccurate and regularly have to be revised, we suggest you read a paper published by the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The paper examines the extent to which these revisions make the initial published data unreliable (and concludes that reliability remains high):

Those are some of the reasons why, to understand macroeconomics, we need to step back from that high-frequency and dense data. To see what lies behind the immediate news, we need to create some distance.

Another reason for standing back from the high-density information is that we need a framework for organising our thoughts. Essentially, that is the role of a theory. Theoretical models in macroeconomics are frameworks for organising our thoughts in a way that enables us to make sense of the macroeconomic phenomena of actual economies. They are models that attempt to identify the systematic relationships that exist between economic variables.

Let us illustrate with an example. An important idea concerning the interaction between macroeconomics and the financial markets is the notion that firms’ investment in physical assets is negatively related to the interest rates on corporate bonds and credit. But if we look at the most recent data on firms’ investment and on interest rates we would not be able to identify a systematic relationship even if the data were accurate. The accepted approach is to develop a theoretical model that identifies the relationships between investment, interest rates and other variables (or ‘explains’ the relationships). That theoretical model can then be evaluated against data by using statistical techniques (econometrics) and large data series.

In this unit we will set out some key elements of a macroeconomic framework. In the rest of the course we will study some specific systematic relationships in macroeconomics.

1.3 Long-Run and Short-Run Macroeconomics

A country’s macroeconomic position in the short run is often different from its long-run outcome. Economies experience cycles in which booms are followed by recessions. In a short period of a few boom years the data show high positive rates of growth followed by a few years of recession when the data show negative growth (declines) in GDP. The long term, however, is marked by a trend that averages those booms and recessions. In the long run developed economies experience a positive growth trend. That long-run rate of growth is lower than the high growth experienced in short-run booms and is above the low (negative) growth experienced in recessions.

People often experience myopia. They are able focus only on the short-term economic position and do not see the long-term trend. In financial markets there is a well-known phenomenon of investors believing that a current boom is all that matters; in a boom they ignore the fact that the long-run trend rate of growth is lower than in the recent period.

As analysts we need to be able to distinguish the long term from the short term. Your objective is to be able to do more than observe macroeconomic changes. It is to be able to analyse what underlies them or, in other words, what systematic cause–effect relations produce macroeconomic changes. To do that we need to distinguish between the key factors that determine both:

- long-run macroeconomic trends, and
- short-run changes (often called medium-term changes in policy analyses).
An important principle, which is often missed in popular discussion of economic policy, is this: the factors that are important for long-run trends are not necessarily the same as those that determine short-run (medium-term) changes. Therefore policies to induce faster growth in the medium term might be the opposite of those needed for long-term growth.

**Box 1.1 Short run and long run GDP changes: a US illustration**

The charts in this Box illustrate the ideas introduced at the beginning of Section 1.3. The data represented in Figure 1.1 show the rate of growth of the United States’ GDP in each year from 1998 through 2011. They illustrate short-term changes in GDP.

Measuring the annual rate of growth on the right hand vertical axis, they show that a high rate of 4.8 per cent was recorded for 1999 (during the ‘dot com boom’ characterised by financial speculation) while in 2009, following the financial crash of 2008, the economy shrank, recording negative GDP growth of –3.5 per cent.

The chart illustrates a major economic cycle – the one that has marked our recent experience and had wide effects on economies, politics, and societies. It was characterised by an upswing with increasing rates of growth of GDP from 2002 to 2004 followed by slower but still positive rates of growth until the end of 2007. The downswing began in 2008 when no growth was recorded and continued into 2009 when GDP shrank by 3.5 per cent.

The authoritative National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) measures US economic cycles.

**Figure 1.1 United States Real GDP Growth** (annual per cent change)

![Graph showing United States Real GDP Growth from 1998 to 2015](source: IMF DATA MAPPER, IMF 2010 : World Economic Outlook (September 2011))

**1.3.1 Aggregate supply**

Economists regard an economy’s aggregate performance in the long run, its long-run macroeconomic growth rate, as determined by supply phenomena. The *aggregate supply* of goods and services, and the things that determine aggregate supply, are regarded as the fundamental determinants of long-run growth of GDP.
The macroeconomic analysis of those relationships is known as *growth theory* and, for many, its importance eclipses the study of short-term macroeconomic fluctuations. A small increase in the average rate of growth of a country’s GDP sustained over decades – its long-run macroeconomic growth rate – has a much greater effect on the standard of living than a higher rate of growth over the few years of a short-term boom or the temporary decline in a recession. As one leading macroeconomist, David Romer, puts it, ‘the welfare consequences of long-run growth swamp any possible effects of...short-run fluctuations’ (Romer, 1996, p.5).

The main elements that determine aggregate supply in the long term are changes in the supply of labour and capital, and changes in their productivity. In an efficient economy the rate of growth of productivity is the result of technical change, and modern growth theory examines several ways in which technical change occurs.

### Optional reading

Modern growth theory is not part of this course, but if you wish to study it in the future there are many good articles and books you could read to give you an overview. One, which we suggest as a useful starting point, is written by Robert Solow, one of the fathers of twentieth-century growth theory. Solow outlines and comments upon the theories of endogenous growth that developed after the mid 1980s, almost thirty years after his own path-breaking writing:


The key idea we would like you to remember about modern growth theory is that it treats the economy’s long-run growth rate as being determined by aggregate supply alone. It assumes that aggregate demand is adequate to ensure that the growing output is sold. It is assumed that the long-run rate of growth is not affected by aggregate demand growing slower or faster.

In the *short run*, GDP may grow faster (in booms) or slower (in recessions) than the long-run rate of growth.

That may result from supply shocks causing aggregate supply to deviate from its long-run growth path. A famous example is the policy-induced quadrupling of the price of oil, a major input into production of goods and services, in 1973. It pushed the growth of output of goods and services in the US (and world-wide) below the previous growth rate of GDP. However, macroeconomic analysis of short-term fluctuations starts with the influence aggregate demand has on output.

### 1.3.2 Aggregate demand

Aggregate demand influences the amount of goods and services actually produced. If, at some time during a recession, aggregate demand is below the economy’s capacity output, production will be below the capacity output denoted by the long-run growth path. With aggregate demand being below capacity output, capital and labour are underutilised or unemployed.
We analyse aggregate demand influences on the economy’s output and income while initially assuming that the supply factors underlying long-run growth – changes in technology, growth of the capital stock, and growth of the labour force – are absent.

In the most basic, simple macroeconomic models, a position where actual output is below the level that the available labour force and capital stock could produce with existing technology is described as output below full-capacity output. In such models it is assumed that the discrepancy arises because aggregate demand is too low. Most importantly, in the most simplified models it is assumed that an increase in output towards its full capacity level can be created by an increase in aggregate demand in a direct sense: an increase in the quantity of goods and services demanded leads to an increase in the quantity of output with no change in prices.

In the more developed macroeconomic models that are the accepted framework today, the full capacity level of output is defined in terms of market equilibrium and increases in aggregate demand have effects on prices as well as raising the quantity of output.

Since aggregate demand has a key role in short-run fluctuations, macroeconomics gives attention to analysing the determinants of aggregate demand. In this course we concentrate mainly upon short-run fluctuations. To lay firm foundations, the next section enables you to review some of the basic concepts of aggregate demand analysis.

1.4 Aggregate Demand and National Income Accounts

Aggregate demand includes demand for goods and services of many different types, therefore we have to analyse the different factors that influence demands for different things: it would be unreasonable to assume that the demand for food responds to the same variables as the demand for machinery in the short term. Similarly, different types of agents buy goods and services – it would be unreasonable to assume that government demand for goods and services is determined by the same factors that influence firms’ demand.

To take account of the main different types of goods and services that are demanded, and the main categories of agents, macroeconomists divide the aggregate demand for goods and services into four broad categories (Consumer demand by the private sector, Investment demand by the private sector, Government demand and Net foreign demand) and their sub-categories:

- Consumer demand by the private sector \( C \)
- Investment demand by the private sector \( I \)
  - comprising two sub-categories
    - Investment in fixed capital \( I^k \)
    - Investment in inventories \( I^i \)
- Government demand \( G \)
Net foreign demand
\( (X - Z) \)
Exports \((X)\) minus Imports \((Z)\) of goods and services.

Thus, total aggregate demand in an economy is the sum of those broad categories of demand:

\[
\text{Aggregate Demand (AD)} = C + I + G + (X - Z)
\]

If the value that consumers, firms, government, and other countries’ residents demand is the same as they actually do spend, that aggregate expenditure exactly equals aggregate supply, the value of goods and services that are actually sold. That means that a measure of a nation’s output (its aggregate supply) such as Gross Domestic Product equals aggregate demand measured on similar principles:

- Gross Domestic Product equals Gross Domestic Expenditure (aggregate demand).

And, since aggregate supply generates income to producers in the form of profits and wages (before tax, interest, and rent):

- Gross Domestic Product also equals Gross Domestic Income.

Those equalities have an interesting implication, which is a useful keystone for all macroeconomic analysis, so let us pause briefly and reflect on them. Let us use \( AD \) for aggregate demand or gross domestic expenditure, \( AS \) for aggregate supply or gross domestic product, and \( Y \) for gross domestic income. Then the equalities described in the previous paragraph can be written as:

\[
AD = AS = Y \tag{1.1}
\]

Since
\[
AD = C + I + G + (X - Z) \tag{1.2}
\]
\[
Y = C + I + G + (X - Z) \tag{1.3}
\]

That statement of the equality between gross domestic income and the sum of the components of aggregate demand enables us to identify quite easily a simple relationship that is a key for macroeconomic analysis. It is the fact that in any economy the amount saved always equals investment demand, plus government expenditure, plus net exports. We can demonstrate that using equations 1.4 through 1.6.

Saving \((S)\) can be defined as the difference between total income and consumption expenditure:

\[
S = Y - C \tag{1.4}
\]

If we subtract \(C\) from both sides of Equation 1.4, it follows that

\[
Y - C = I + G + (X - Z) \tag{1.5}
\]

Or, in other words

\[
S = I + G + (X - Z) \tag{1.6}
\]

The ideas outlined in this section are the most basic ideas in macroeconomics. But even simple ideas are puzzling and create questions. In fact, some
would say that the simpler the idea the more questions it raises since it tries to reduce a hugely complex world to a thin form. It is rather like trying to create an image of a person using only a sketch or a line drawing; the lines might enable us to highlight key features, but they fail to capture all the person’s dimensions.

Therefore, before you proceed to the next section, please take the time to study some of the complexities we have omitted so far in our discussion of aggregate demand, aggregate supply and gross domestic income. They are explained in the following readings.

Reading

Please study Chapters 1 and 2 of your textbook by David Miles, Andrew Scott and Francis Breedon: *Macroeconomics: Understanding the Global Economy*. We recommend that you ensure that you fully understand Section 2.4 of Chapter 2 (‘Three measures of output: output, income and expenditure’), which gives a thorough explanation of the principles outlined in Section 1.4 of this unit. But it is valuable to read Chapter 1 and preceding sections of Chapter 2 carefully too, in order to understand the broader context and the foundations of section 2.4.

When you have read the Textbook’s explanation of concepts related to aggregate demand and national income accounts, please take a minute to consolidate your understanding. Write a few sentences for yourself explaining the difference between nominal gross domestic product and real gross domestic product, and explain the meaning of the GDP deflator.

1.5 Alternative Windows on Macroeconomics

The evolution of modern macroeconomics since 1945 has occurred in a changing world environment. In its early days, economists were concerned to avoid a repeat of the mass unemployment the industrial economies experienced in the 1930s. Subsequent experience of inflation led to attempts to develop policies to reduce price and wage increases. In the 1980s and 1990s the connection between macroeconomics and booms in asset markets (especially real estate and stock markets) gained importance, and in recent years macroeconomic analysts have been concerned with resisting deflation, increasing GDP growth in advanced economies, and dealing with global imbalances marked by China’s external surplus and the external deficit of the US. Partly as a result of such changing circumstances and the policy demands they have placed on economic analysis, macroeconomics can be viewed from a number of different perspectives. The window through which macroeconomics is viewed depends partly on the times and partly on the position of the person studying it.

This course looks at macroeconomics from the point of view of modern financial markets. That gives it a different emphasis from courses that approach macroeconomics from the point of view of the labour market or from the point of view of technological change and long-run economic growth.
Although the core of our knowledge of macroeconomic behaviour is the same irrespective of whether we view it through the financial market window, the labour market window or through technical change, the problems and ideas that are given centre-stage differ. Macroeconomics courses that have the labour market at the fore illuminate the key problem of whether policy makers can achieve a trade-off between unemployment and inflation. A course with financial markets at the fore gives greater emphasis to the interaction between finance and aggregate demand.

Because this course is designed to enable you to learn about macroeconomics from the perspective of modern financial markets it deals with:

- how macroeconomic shocks and macroeconomic policy affect financial markets and financial institutions, and
- how financial markets and institutions themselves affect macroeconomics.

### 1.6 Macroeconomics and Financial Markets

How do macroeconomic shocks and macroeconomic policy affect financial markets and financial institutions?

How do financial markets and institutions affect macroeconomics?

By the end of this course you will be able to provide some answers to those questions. You will also find that trying to answer those questions leads you into other, more detailed questions. But it is not only you, as a graduate student, who is grappling with these questions, for they are the questions that grip the mind of financial decision makers and leading policy makers every day.

Let us see how those academic questions are paralleled by the real world concerns of a leading policy maker, Alan Greenspan.

#### 1.6.1 A central banker’s macroeconomic view of the USA

Alan Greenspan became the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, the US central bank that determines monetary policy, in mid 1987. During his tenure he was sometimes called the second most powerful man in the world, second only to the US President. While the American economy boomed he was widely praised, but his reign is now widely regarded as disastrously creating the conditions that led to the 2007–2008 crash of the US financial system and subsequent recession.

The power of the Federal Reserve Chairman stems from the responsibility the Federal Reserve has for determining monetary policy in the United States. A successful Chairman also has great influence over fiscal policy – the Federal budget – which is the other key element of the country’s macroeconomic policy. And the Chairman’s influence goes well beyond the US, for what happens to the US economy affects economies around the globe. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board gives a written report to the US Congress, the legislators, every six months and gives testimony about it in person.
We would like you to read the testimony Mr Greenspan gave to Congress on 16 July 2002 regarding his six-monthly report. There Mr Greenspan gives several examples of his thinking on how macroeconomics affects finance and how finance affects macroeconomics. Before reading it, please remember the context. The US economy had experienced an unprecedented boom with remarkable growth of GDP during the 1990s. The boom had ended in 2001, but in the first half of 2002 there were signs that the economy was pulling out of recession and into another period of sustained growth. However, no one could be certain and there were grounds for pessimism. Mr Greenspan discusses the main factors the Federal Reserve identified at that time as influencing the economy’s prospects.

Readings and Exercises

We would like you to read Alan Greenspan’s testimony now and also the ‘Federal Reserve Board’s semiannual monetary policy report to the Congress’. These are reprinted in the Course Reader, but may alternatively be found on the web http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/hh/2002/july/testimony.htm

While reading Alan Greenspan’s testimony, please make a note of the different types of influences this Chairman considers. In particular, we would like you to identify statements:

- where he discusses the influence of financial markets on macroeconomic prospects
- where he discusses the influence of macroeconomic changes on financial markets
- where he considers important macroeconomic influences but does not directly link them to financial markets.

Greenspan’s testimony is underpinned by the more technical six-monthly ‘Monetary Policy Report’ the Federal Reserve Board makes to Congress. Please read the Report submitted at the same time as the Chairman’s testimony of July 2002, also reprinted in the Course Reader, or available online: http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/hh/2002/july/FullReport.htm.

The Testimony of the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, and the Board’s Monetary Policy Report gives a strong insight into how the Federal Reserve thinks about the relation between macroeconomics and financial markets. They deal with four broad categories:

1 Aggregate demand for goods and services
   - demand for inventories
   - demand for consumer goods and services
   - demand for physical investment goods

2 Supply of goods and services
   - productivity of labour
   - labour market conditions

3 Financial markets
   - price of finance
   - amount of finance

4 Foreign transactions.
Please make a note of those elements in the Federal Reserve’s macroeconomic assessment. They include some categories that we have already considered above, but the lists are not identical; in these reports the Federal Reserve gives emphasis only to some of the categories of aggregate demand we have listed earlier in this unit (see Section 1.4 ‘Aggregate Demand and National Income Accounts’) and it includes several economic indicators that are not included in our aggregate demand categories.

Please write lists of each of the:

- categories of aggregate demand that are not emphasised in the federal Reserve reports
- indicators the Federal Reserve emphasises that are not components of aggregate demand.

A comparison of the lists draws attention to a number of their elements. We would like to consider more fully three elements that are important for the main subject of this course – the interaction between macroeconomics and financial markets. The three are:

- the price of finance
- the amount of finance
- inventory investment.

1.6.2 The price of finance

In 2002 the Federal Reserve’s influence over the economy was exercised through one main policy instrument, the rate of interest on Federal Funds, the price of finance in the short-term credit market for Federal Funds. The relation between that interest rate and the price of finance to households and firms is complex, but you can see from the Report that the Federal Reserve believes that the expenditure of households and firms is sensitive to the price they have to pay for finance and the factors that influence it.

Here are some of the effects of the price of finance that the Report mentions:

- The Report argues that low interest rates for mortgage credit help to explain the fact that household expenditure on real estate and consumer goods was strong in 2002 and had remained relatively high while other parts of the economy experienced a slowdown in previous years.
- Higher interest rates to compensate lenders for risk affected some companies as risk perceptions worsened. The crash of the dot com boom and revelations of poor corporate governance and controversial accounting, which made the reported profits of some companies unreliable, made borrowers judge many companies to be more risky. Companies that, as a result, faced higher finance costs had an incentive to reduce their spending on investment in fixed assets and inventories.
- Another element in the price of finance that companies face is the cost of equity finance. In general, a fall in the price of a company’s equity implies a rise in the cost of capital, the rate of return investors expect as an inducement to hold shares. The Report identifies the depressing effect on firms of the decline in share prices experienced after the long equity boom ended in 2001.
If you have studied an undergraduate macroeconomics course you are familiar with simplified models, such as the IS-LM model, which give the interest rate a central role in linking monetary policy to aggregate demand. As the Report suggests, in the more complex real world that the Federal Reserve faces, the price of finance cannot be reduced to a single interest rate (‘the’ interest rate). And the factors influencing the price of finance are complex.

1.6.3 **The quantity of finance**

The amount of finance can have an effect on aggregate demand quite separate from the price of finance. A major financial crisis is often characterised by a ‘credit crunch’ under which firms find that they simply cannot borrow new or replacement funds; the market can become so illiquid that credit is not available to meet borrowers’ demand. The nadir of the 2007-8 financial crisis was marked by one of the most severe credit crunches ever seen: at times wholesale credit markets effectively ceased to operate.

If the quantity of finance of various types falls short of the amounts that firms desire, the shortage can affect firms’ expenditure on investment goods. Such a credit crunch can be seen as a quantity effect rather than a price effect – it is not simply a matter of having to pay higher interest rates (price of credit), for in such circumstances the amount of finance available would be below firms’ demand for finance even at higher rates.

Similarly, in less disturbed times the amount of finance available can have a quantity effect distinct from a price effect.

In the section ‘Corporate Profits and Business Finance’, the authors of the Monetary Policy Report to the Congress describe the factors affecting the quantity of different types of finance available to firms. Their comments relate to the quantity effect of finance. That is illustrated by two comments in particular:

- ‘The rise in profits...helped keep nonfinancial corporations’ need for external funds below the average of last year.’
- ‘Although many businesses have apparently substituted bond debt for shorter term financing by choice, others...have done so by necessity: They were pushed out of the commercial paper market...’

To fully understand the quantity effect of both financial phenomena we need to use a model of firms’ behaviour that is well established in the literature of corporate finance and studied in corporate finance courses – ‘the pecking order theory’ or ‘financing hierarchy theory’.

The ‘pecking order theory’ set out by Myers and Majluf (1984: pp. 187–221) says that, because information is not equally available to all, firms have preferences between different sources of finance. Firms prefer to finance their investment spending first by using their own internal funds. If the quantity of that finance is inadequate they turn to their second preference, credit of various types (bank debt, issue of commercial paper, issue of corporate bonds). Only as a last resort do they choose to obtain finance by issuing new equities.
Because of those preferences, the rise in profits identified in the Report can be interpreted as an improvement in the quantity of preferred finance available for firms’ investment.

On the other hand, the Report suggests a quantity effect in relation to short-term debt – firms’ commercial paper. Firms were unable to obtain as much credit as they wished in the market for commercial paper and had to find other sources. If alternative sources had not been available they would have had to reduce their investment spending.

1.6.4 Inventory investment

Inventory investment ($I^i$) is one component of aggregate demand that receives attention in the Federal Reserve’s macroeconomic assessment as an indicator of economic conditions.

At this point we would like to discuss inventory investment, instead of other components such as consumer demand ($C$) or investment demand for physical investment goods, fixed capital investment ($I^f$). Inventory investment measures firms’ increases in inventories of raw materials, intermediate goods or finished products; when negative it shows a net decrease in inventories. The largest component of the private sector’s aggregate demand in the US is consumer demand, accounting for approximately 70 per cent of aggregate demand, and the second largest component is investment in fixed capital. Changes in those ‘final demand’ components of aggregate demand have a large influence on total conditions; Alan Greenspan’s view of a possible economic expansion was that it would depend on the strength of such final demand: ‘…the strength of final demand will play its usual central role in determining the vigour of the expansion’. Changes in inventory levels in any period (the rate of inventory investment or disinvestment) account for a small proportion of gross domestic product, but they sometimes play an important role, tipping changes in total aggregate demand in one direction or another.

The reason we would like you to think about inventory investment here, despite its low relative size in the US economy, is that it highlights an important aspect of macroeconomic analysis and policy – the distinction between agents’ aggregate demand and their actual expenditure. That distinction is closely related to discrepancies between demand and supply and consequent changes in agents’ asset holdings.

Consider, again, the following passage from Alan Greenspan’s testimony in July 2002:

… the fundamentals are in place for a return to sustained healthy growth: imbalances in inventories and capital goods appear largely to have been worked off; inflation is quite low and is expected to remain so; and productivity growth has been remarkably strong … As has often been the case in the past, the behavior of inventories provided substantial impetus for the initial strengthening of the economy. Manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers took vigorous steps throughout 2001 to eliminate an unwanted buildup of stocks that emerged when final demand slowed late in 2000. By early this year, with inventory levels having apparently come into better alignment with expected sales, the pace of inventory reduction began to ebb, and efforts to limit further drawdowns provided a considerable boost to production. The available evidence suggests that,
in some sectors, liquidation may be giving way to a rebuilding of inventories. However, as inventories start to grow more in line with sales in coming quarters, the contribution of inventory investment to real GDP growth should lessen. As a result, the strength of final demand will play its usual central role in determining the vigor of the expansion.

In his analysis of how firms’ demand for inventory goods to increase their inventories (inventory investment), or their negative demand (inventory disinvestment), affects total aggregate demand, Greenspan introduces a concept we have not considered yet. He noted that there had previously been an ‘unwanted buildup of stocks’ at the end of year 2000 because the ‘final demand’ components of aggregate demand had been low at that time.

The phenomenon of an ‘unwanted buildup of stocks’ compels us to re-examine the meaning of aggregate demand. We have to distinguish between agents’ desired aggregate demand and actual aggregate demand. In previous sections we have implicitly assumed that the two are identical, but the inventory changes of late 2000 that Greenspan describes makes clear that a difference can exist, and the difference has real effects.

The level of investment in inventories – the increase in stocks – that firms desire is to be denoted by $I_i$, but the investment that they actually carry out is $\hat{I}_i$. An ‘unwanted buildup of stocks’ occurs when $\hat{I}_i$ is higher than $I_i$. In those circumstances firms find themselves owning an increase in inventories they did not intend to own. Their ‘unwanted buildup’ is an increase in their assets just as much as their planned inventory accumulation is; therefore, it counts as ‘actual investment in inventories’.

The distinction between desired and actual inventory investment carries through to aggregate demand as a whole. Previously we defined aggregate demand as

$$AD = C + I + G + (X - Z)$$

$$= C + (I^k + I^d) + (G) + (X - Z)$$

Now we can define actual aggregate demand by replacing desired inventory investment with actual inventory investment:

$$Actual \ AD = C + (I^k + \hat{I}_i) + (G) + (X - Z)$$

In the case we are considering, actual aggregate demand (Actual $AD$) differs from desired aggregate demand ($AD$) to the extent that firms’ actual inventory investment is different from their desired inventory investment.

We have been considering the case described by Greenspan where actual inventory investment is greater than firms’ desired investment in stocks. It is worth reflecting on two puzzles:

- Could actual inventory investment be lower than desired inventory investment?
- Could other elements of aggregate demand, such as consumer demand or investment in fixed capital, also show a difference between agents’ desired and actual levels?

In any period an economy’s Actual Aggregate Demand can differ from Aggregate Demand. That leads us to reflect again on the connection between aggregate demand, gross domestic product, and gross domestic income. In
Section 1.4, you considered the fundamental national income equalities between aggregate demand, gross domestic product, and gross domestic income:

\[ AD = AS = Y \]

Now that we know there can be a difference between \( AD \) and Actual \( AD \), which is the appropriate measure of aggregate demand in the national income equalities? In fact, the equalities are only valid if we use actual aggregate demand:

\[ \text{Actual } AD = AS = Y \]

The intuition behind that idea is this. The value of new goods and services produced (\( AS \)) must yield an income for their producers (\( Y \)). That income is the value added in producing them and has two basic components – the rewards to labour, wages, and the rewards to capital, profits. The value of new goods and services produced must equal the value of expenditure on them on condition that we include all expenditure, including spending that was unintended.

In our example, that means we must include actual inventory investment, including the unintended component. If output in any period is greater than desired aggregate demand, producers cannot sell all the output they thought they could to willing customers. Therefore, they find they have unsold finished goods, or part-finished goods, or raw materials. In other words, they have actual growth of inventories higher than their desired inventory investment. Because that actual inventory investment is itself a component of actual aggregate demand, actual aggregate demand automatically equals aggregate supply.

Now, let us think about Alan Greenspan’s discussion of the prospects for the US economy in 2002. Our detour to look at ‘unintended inventory investment’ was a long trip. But now it enables us to get a view of what effects, according to Alan Greenspan, resulted from the late 2000 ‘unwanted build-up of stocks’. In 2002 the Federal Reserve judged that the rise in unintended inventory investment (\( \hat{I} - I \)) in late 2000 led firms to take action in 2001; they cut back on desired inventory investment in 2001, reducing \( I \) to negative levels in order to cut stocks back to a level that matched the desired ratio of inventories to expected sales. By mid 2002, it seemed that adjustment had occurred.

The overall picture painted by Greenspan is that at certain times a slowdown in aggregate demand can cause a rise in unintended inventory investment, which has a temporary effect on gross domestic product. Firms’ subsequent efforts to reduce the unwanted stocks amplifies the reduction in aggregate demand by making desired inventory investment negative (a drawdown of inventories). But once that has been worked through, the basic determinants of aggregate demand – demand for consumer goods, investment fixed assets, and net exports – ‘final demand’ again comes to ‘play its usual central role’.
1.7 Macroeconomics and Finance in Subsequent Units

Macroeconomic developments in any country – such as the level and rate of change of GDP, the rate of unemployment, the balance of trade with other countries – depend to a large extent on the behaviour of two large economic aggregates, saving and investment.

Recall from Section 1.4 of this unit that the difference between GDP and aggregate saving is aggregate consumption expenditure. Therefore, saying that saving and investment are the major determinants of macroeconomic developments implies also that aggregate demand in the form of consumption and investment expenditure are crucial.

Now let us consider financial markets, including the markets for bonds, bank credit, and equities. In financial economics we see those markets and their institutions – the financial system – as located between savers and investors. Ultimately, the role of the financial system is to intermediate between savers and investors or, in other words, to act as a channel that enables savings to finance investment.

Since saving and investment are fundamental to both macroeconomics and financial markets they are fundamental to the links and interaction between macroeconomics and financial markets. In Unit 2 you will study saving, followed, in Unit 3, by studying investment.

The interaction of aggregate saving and investment generates macroeconomic fluctuations. Economies experience booms and slumps with associated fluctuations in inflation (or deflation), unemployment, and foreign trade and capital flows, and those movements interact with changes on financial markets. Monetary policy and fiscal policy attempt to moderate those macroeconomic fluctuations partly by influencing the aggregate saving (consumption) and investment of the private sector. Therefore in Unit 4 you will study monetary policy, building on the material in Units 2 and 3. In the following unit, Unit 5, we discuss fiscal policy.

Both monetary and fiscal policies have effects that work through financial markets. For example, central banks’ use of their main instrument, an interest rate, requires them to operate in financial markets to influence rates. Similarly, fiscal policy affects the balance between government expenditure and tax receipts, and deficits have to be financed by government borrowing of various types. Consequently, fiscal policy, too, has a systematic influence on financial markets. The connections that monetary and fiscal policies have with financial markets are studied in Units 4 and 5.

A driving force behind financial markets in the real world and in theory is the expectations of dealers and of the firms and households that hold assets and issue securities. The effectiveness of macroeconomic policy, whether monetary policy or fiscal policy, depends on the private sector’s expectations both in financial markets and in the markets where wages and goods prices are determined. In Unit 6 we consider the macroeconomic role of expectations, concentrating particularly on expectations of future inflation and interest rates.
In Units 7 and 8, we discuss the links between macroeconomics and international financial markets. The previous units have mainly dealt with macroeconomic relations within a country. We have abstracted from the international dimension although international financial phenomena dominate macroeconomic events in many economies, and at particular times. In the final quarter of the course we introduce the international dimension.

Unit 7 enables you to study the interaction between exchange rates, determined in currency markets, and a country’s international trade (exports and imports). In Unit 8 we focus on some principal aspects of the links between macroeconomics and international capital flows, cross-border investment by financial institutions and firms.

Your study of international aspects in Units 7 and 8 conclude this course. We hope that by the end of the course you will feel that you have studied some challenging ideas, that you have a deeper understanding of macroeconomic policy’s interaction with financial markets, and that your new understanding also raises new and interesting questions in your mind.

References and Websites


National Bureau of Economic Research (2011)


